NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP

***Costilla and Conejos Counties are unique in that they retain a strong character of traditional Hispanic farming methods. Among other things, these characteristics include irrigation through acequias, and subsistence farming of small units of land called Vara strips. Simply put, an acequia is a surface irrigation ditch, but in Hispanic culture it also involves strong cultural relationships.***

***In response, in 2004 NRCS implemented the Acequia/Vara strip program through our EQIP program. Most of the farmers in Costilla County utilized cost-share funds to improve the acequias with headgates and/or gated pipe. These relatively simple and low-cost improvements allowed farmers to abandon primitive methods of water diversion, such as hay bales and tarps, and significantly improve irrigation efficiency on their small acreages.***

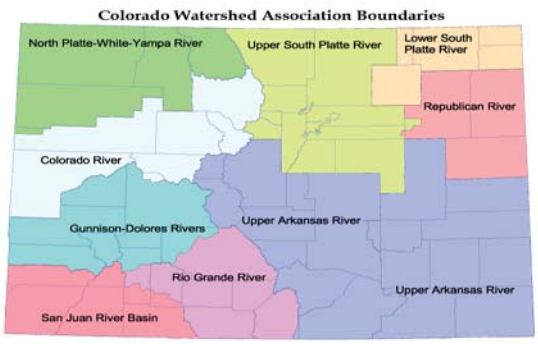
## *The Program*

The **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** is a voluntary conservation program that provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to farmers and ranchers. It s a tool that addresses significant natural resource concerns including water quality and quantity, soil quality, rangeland health, and drought while implementing conservation practices such as:

- Stockwater development
- Irrigation delivery and system improvements
- Tree and shrub plantings
- Grass seeding
- Related management practices such as prescribed grazing, irrigation water management, and wildlife habitat management

## *Funding Allocations*

**EQIP funds are distributed in Colorado s 10 watershed areas**.




**These watershed areas are identified at the local level** and are reviewed and supported by the State Technical Committee, made up of conservation partners from various Federal, state, and local agencies, several agricultural organizations, and others.

In addition to the general EQIP process, Colorado also receives funds in three watersheds earmarked for **salinity control work**.

**Colorado also receives funds through the Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) component of EQIP**. These funds are available for water-conserving practices in the High Plains Aquifer, or that area generally known as the Ogallala Aquifer in Colorado.

## *The Assistance*

EQIP activities are carried out according to an EQIP plan of operation developed in conjunction with the producer.

- Contracts for confined livestock feeding operations require the development and implementation of a comprehensive nutrient management plan
- **EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term of one year and a maximum term of ten years**
- **NRCS pays up to 75 percent** of the cost of certain conservation practices
- Total cost-share and incentive payments are limited to **$450,000 per individual**

# FISCAL YEAR 2003 EQIP CONTRACT FUNDING

***Totals by Watersheds***

| Watershed | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | $ Applications Approved |
|---|---|---|---|
| Colorado River | 212 | 98 | 2,380,051 |
| Gunnison | 430 | 163 | 5,163,170 |
| Lower Arkansas | 392 | 132 | 3,191,851 |
| Lower South Platte | 308 | 129 | 2,166,791 |
| North Platte/Yampa | 116 | 43 | 740,152 |
| Republican | 358 | 164 | 2,272,600 |
| Rio Grande | 343 | 128 | 1,465,806 |
| San Juan | 263 | 151 | 3,800,801 |
| Upper Arkansas | 212 | 89 | 1,548,628 |
| Upper South Platte | 244 | 166 | 2,806,115 |
| **TOTAL** | | | $ 00,000,00 |

***State-wide Totals by Issue***

| Issue | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | $ Applications Approved |
|---|---|---|---|
| Water Quality/Quantity | 1079 | 490 | 9,588,577 |
| Soil Erosion | 253 | 107 | 1,253,314 |
| Grasslands | 611 | 256 | 4,290,612 |
| Wildlife | 221 | 58 | 950,977 |
| Animal Waste | 90 | 21 | 803,283 |
| Riparian | 39 | 14 | 202,628 |
| Forest Management | 28 | 11 | 102,093 |
| Salinity | 437 | 221 | 7,768,361 |
| CNMP | 46 | 27 | 13,500 |
| AITF | 5 | 5 | 75,066 |
| Tribes | 4 | 3 | 358,362 |
| Acequias | 65 | 50 | 129,192 |
| **TOTAL** | **2,878** | **1,263** | **$ 25,535,965** |

***GSWC Totals by Watershed***

| Watershed | # Applications Received | # Applications Approved | $ Applications Approved |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Congressional District 4* | | | |
| Lower Arkansas | 108 | 24 | 1,144,566 |
| Lower South Platte | 116 | 27 | 629,992 |
| Republican | 82 | 22 | 576,792 |
| *Congressional District 3* | | | |
| Rio Grande | 144 | 42 | 922,634 |
| **GSWC Totals** | **450** | **115** | **3,273,984** |
| **EQIP Totals** | **2,878** | **1,263** | **25,534,965** |
| **TOTAL** | **3,328** | **1,378** | **$ 28,808,949** |